GRAFFITI IN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS OF KOLKATA: A STUDY BASED ON PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY AND JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

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Submitted by: Tanu Biswas

Enrollment No: 2322220005004

Registration No: 230050041392

Department of Fine Arts and Design

Sister Nivedita University

Newtown, Kolkata

Sister Nivedita University

Department of Fine Arts and Design

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Guide:	**Mr. Pratap Manna**
Co-Guide (if any)	**(Dr) Sanjay Sen Gupta**
Student's Name:	**Tanu Biswas**
Enrollment No:	**2322220005004**
Registration No:	**230050041392**
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Pratap Manna 16/04/2025

Co-Guide's Signature with Date

Guide's Signature with Date

DECLARATION BY THE STUDENT

I hereby declare that the work which is being presented in this dissertation entitled "Graffiti in University Campus of Kolkata: A study based on Presidency University and Jadavpur University" in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelors/Masters/Ph.D of Fine Arts in Painting is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the period from February 2025 to April 2025 under the supervision of Mr. Pratap Manna, Department of Fine Arts and Design, Sister Nivedita University.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the UGC regulations, 2018 (*Promotion of Academic integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions*).

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Tanu Biswas

16.04.2025

(Signature of the students with Date)

Name of the Student: Tanu Biswas

Registration no.: 230050041392

Department: Fine Arts and Design

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Introduction

Graffiti refers to the act of creating visual art or writing texts, often without permission, on surfaces in the open or in public like walls, buildings, corridors, footpaths, streets etc, as a dynamic form of expression that has evolved since the 1960s in the United States of America. This medium gradually got transformed from vandalism to a powerful medium of self-expression, social commentary, and cultural critique. From the streets of New York to different parts of the world, graffiti has become a dynamic and thought-provoking rendering and tool for diverse cultures creating a sense of community among the youth.

Graffiti in India emerged as a dynamic and expressive form, reflecting the country's diverse culture and socio-political experiences. From the bustling streets of Mumbai to the historic walls of Delhi to the vibrant walls and college campuses of Kolkata, graffiti has become a powerful medium for social commentary and artistic innovations. Particularly in Kolkata, graffiti evolved from its early beginnings in the 1980s as a form of rebellious youth expression, writing the walls of Kolkata to express their political messaging into a vibrant and diverse art form. Initially the practice of wall-writing which has gradually evolved over years as local artists and activists got influenced by the graffiti movement of the West. Over time, graffiti in Kolkata evolved to encompass various subjects, including social issues, environmental concerns, mythology, and daily life experiences.

On college campuses, graffiti serves as a platform for students to express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. It can range from witty humor to poignant social commentary, reflecting the concerns and values of the student community. This dissertation explores the phenomenon of graffiti in Presidency University (previously known as Hindu College, and then Presidency College)[1] and Jadavpur University (initially known as Bengal Engineering College),[2] Kolkata, two prominent institutions known for their rich academic traditions, vibrant student cultures, and histories of activism. These institutions in this context offer a unique panorama for examining the history, evolution and changing role of graffiti in shaping university culture and student identity.

Over time, the graffiti scene in these universities has undergone significant changes, reflecting the evolving concerns and values of the student community. The walls of these institutions serve as canvases for students to express their thoughts, emotions, and opinions on various issues, ranging from social justice and politics to personal experiences and campus life. From simple tags and slogans to intricate murals and thought-provoking installations the art form has become more sophisticated and diverse. The graffiti in these universities not only adds to the aesthetic appeal of the campuses but also provides a unique insight into the minds and perspectives of the students.

[1] Jadavpur University, https://jadavpuruniversity.in/about/history/
[2] Presidency University, https://www.presiuniv.ac.in/web/presidency_history.php

This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how students utilize public spaces in Presidency University and Jadavpur University to express their experiences, challenge dominant narratives, and create alternative forms of communication. Furthermore, this study will explore how graffiti reflects and influences the social, cultural, and political contexts of these universities, shedding light on the intricate relationships between art, identity, and power in academic settings.

This dissertation thus seeks to showcase the importance of graffiti as a means of student expression and a reflection of university life's complexities. It explores graffiti's potential for social commentary, community building, and personal empowerment. Additionally, it documents the reactions and reflections of onlookers within both Presidency University and Jadavpur University campuses, providing insight into how these artworks are perceived and interpreted by the contemporary community.

CHAPTER 1: GRAFFITI AS A FORM OF VISUAL ART -- AN OVERVIEW

Graffiti a form of visual communication derived from an Italian word 'Graffito', meaning drawing or writing scratched on a wall or other surface within public view, some of which still exist in the caves of Lascaux, France and Altamira, Spain. (Figure 1,2&3). Often, it's also described as 'illicit application of a medium to the surface'. They have been found in abundance on the monuments of ancient Egypt. Later, the ancient Greeks and Romans wrote their names and protest poems on building walls and abandon spaces of the city.[3]

Figure 1. caves of Lascaux, France

Figure2. Caves of Lascaux, France c.16,000–14,000 B.C.E.

Figure 3. Magdalenian-era cave painting of a bison, Altamira, Spain.

During the 1930s Great Depression, American workers created "Hobo Graffiti" - a secret communication system using symbols and messages on trains, walls, and public surfaces to share vital information with fellow travelers. (Figure 4& 5).[4] A popular graffiti tag 'KilroWas Here'

[3] Decker & Curry: 2025
[4] Flint & Miles:

featuring a bald-headed man peeking over a wall, symbolizing the presence of American soldiers, can be still seen in the Abandoned military bases and bunkers in France and USA. (Figure 7 & 8)

Later in early 1960s, modern Graffiti appeared in Philadelphia, 95 miles away from New York city, where a young man named Darry McCray (CornBread) initially started writing his names to get attention. Gradually he got involved in the process and continued to tag Philadelphia with his name that earned him the name of the father of modern graffiti.[5]By the late 1960s Graffiti reached New York and a new revolution in art took off as people began writing their names, or tags on buildings all over the city. (Figure 8 & 9)

Figure 4. Hobo carvings at Medford, Oregon's Medford Railroad Park

Figure 5. Hobo carvings in the late 20thy century. *Courtesy of Susan Phillips*

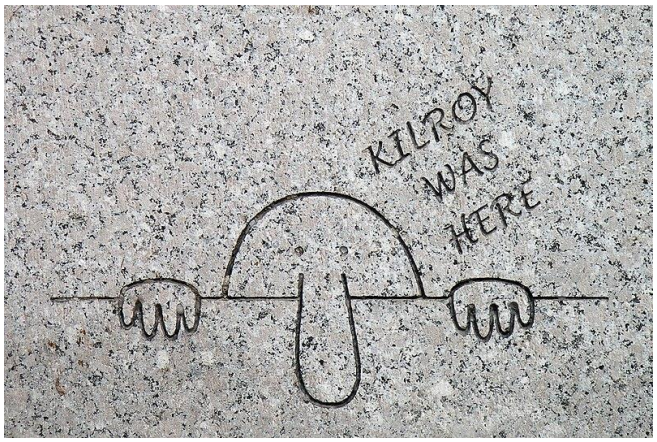

Figure 6. Engraving of Kilroy on the WWII Memorial in Washington DC

Figure 7. Kilroy on Cannon in Kuwait, 1991

[5] Graffiti: History, Purpose and Types
Journeyforevermag.com/typesofgraffiti

In the early 1970s graffiti started taking shape alongside of the HipHop culture. It became a form of visual expression for the disenfranchised youth, reflecting their social and political realities. Its process however was developing so fast in the cities that by the mid-1970s, it was hard to even see out of subways, trains, or car windows as it was completely covered by spray paintings for example Blade, who got to a lot of fame because of 5000 painted trains known as 'Throw ups,' 'letters,' 'tags,' or 'masterpiece' even 'blockbuster.' (Figure 10 & 11)

Figure 8. Graffiti at Philadelphia by CornBread

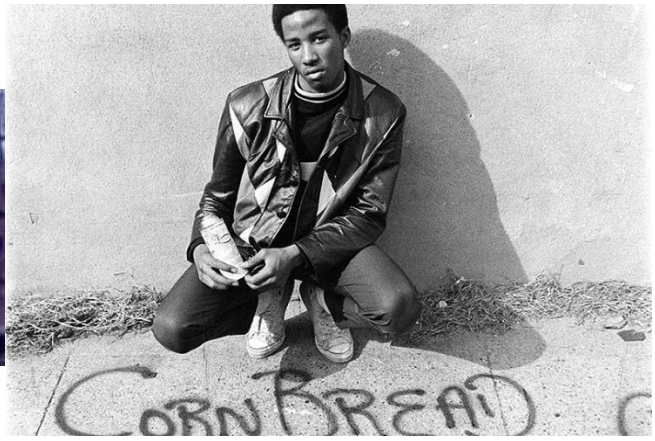

Figure 9. CornBread along his Tag

As a form of visual expression, artists showcased their work publicly because they didn't have access to galleries and art institutions. Despite being considered illegal in many places, Graffiti has flourished underground requiring minimal resources and offering a platform for marginalized voices to express themselves and challenge dominant narratives. On the other hand, visual artist adapted graffiti as a powerful vehicle to articulate their socio-political views, ancestral heritage, and cultural and religious identities. By being in public spaces, it can start important conversations and inspire people to make a difference.

Figure 10. Graffiti on Trains during the late 1970s

Figure 11. Graffiti in the New York City

Some of the early pioneers of graffiti were, Taki 183 highlighting streets with tags, Keith Hering's iconic pop art-infused graffiti, often featuring radiant babies and dancing figures, radiating joy and energy. Jean-Michel Basdaqiat an artist whose bold fusion of street art and abstract expressionism injected depth, emotion, and social commentary. Vaughn Bode was another famous American comic artist as his cartoon style is still widely admired and copied by many graffiti artists today. [6]

Figure 12. Taki quotes his tag on the walls of New York city in the late 1970s

Figure 13. Subway graffiti by Keith Hering

[6] Graffiti Art: A Dynamic Expression of Urban culture and creativity , August 2023

Futura 2000 (Lenny McGurr) followed by Bansky introduced an avant-garde, futuristic approach that pushed the boundaries of traditional graffiti by anonymous stencil-based artworks mostly political in nature. In the early phase, artists work into groups called “CREW” who were basically street gangs and groups concerned with marking territories, among which ‘The Fabulous 5’ was active during the 1970s and 1980s known for their colourful, stylized, and often humorous murals.

Figure 14. Zephyr, Futura, Dondi, 1982

Figure 15. Graffiti by Futura2000 in New York

Figure 16. Graffiti by Zypher, the yellow train series

Figure 17. Graffiti by Banksy

Figure 18. Graffiti by Banksy on a ruin of a city.

Graffiti in India is a potpourri of history, rebellion, and contemporary flair. The country's streets have a long history of cultural marking in urban and semi-urban regions with a unique mode of expression. For example, hand-painted movie posters, typographic signboards, decorative motifs patters and writings on lorries, trucks, buses etc, slogans, divine images painted along sidewalks or tiles affixed to walls, painted advertisements by humble enterprises, and political graffiti, which laid the groundwork for modern graffiti.

Figure 19. Hand painted movie posters in Bombay

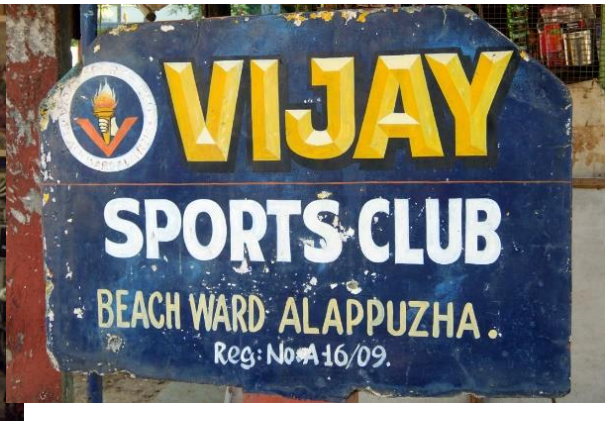

Figure 20. hand painted boards Figure

Figure 21. Hand painted patterns on truck

Figure 22. Stencil Graffiti in the wall

Indian artist groups, like Bombay Progressive Group and Delhi Shilpa Chakra particularly from Bombay and Delhi got inspired by US graffiti culture through direct exposure during international residencies, books & magazines, also networking with US graffiti artists itself.[7] The local artist here had admired the western hip-hop culture and got to know about it by various magazines and shows.

Figure 23. A Graffiti written 'Daku' in hindi in New Delhi by Daku

Figure 24. Graffiti by Tyler in New Delhi

[7] Aparajita & Bhasin, 2018

During 1960s-1970s West Bengal became the hub of political writings on walls, which were used as a means of propagation for political parties like, Charcoal sketches of slain Naxalite activists and psychedelic portraits of Indira Gandhi were among the provocative images that widespread frustration and anger. Communist Party boasted the most creative wall writing. For example, “Yeh Azaadi Jhootha Hain” post-Independence and “Gali gali mein shor hain, Rajiv Gandhi chor hain”. 70% of Kolkata's walls were covered with slogans and political graffiti, earning the phrase "All Walls CPM". In 2011 when TMC, the ruling party of West Bengal assumed, many walls have been covered with white paints or overwritten the TMC party slogans and symbology. Slowly the artist started tagging themselves upon the walls filled with political slogans and symbols.[8]

Figure 25. Walls covered with slogans in West Bengal

Slowly graffiti gained an individual and independent style and became a mode of non-violent protest, more popular among the youth of the city. Contemporaries like Yantra, Zine, Daku and Tyler gained popularity in states of Delhi and Bombay[9]. Young college students without formal artistic backgrounds have emerged as graffiti artists, using city walls as canvases to convey their powerful political messages and thoughts. In Kolkata, one can see various forms of Graffiti/street art using various mediums like, spray cans, watercolours, stencils, charcoal and many more.

Artist uses bold typography to covey messages or slogans, they also use vibrant colours like red, blue, and yellow to grab viewers’ attention. Geometrical shapes and abstract patterns can be seen in many walls with the use to multiple mediums. Traditional Indian motifs and floral patterns of

[8] Pandey Sanjay, 01 August 2015
[9] Pundir Pallavi, 2019

god and goddess shows a blend of traditional and contemporary elements. From voicing social and political opinions to transforming urban landscapes, graffiti culture has evolved into a vibrant form of self-expression among young generation.

Figure 26. Old photos of Kolkata walls. Photographs courtesy Chitrabani/S.Paul

Figure 27. A Trinamool Congress wall graffiti seen on Alimuddin Street in Kolkata.

The culture of university graffiti in Kolkata is a vibrant and dynamic aspect of the city's academic and artistic landscape. It reflects students' political views, critiques government policies, and advocates for social justice, while also addressing social issues like gender equality and environmental degradation. It also incorporates element of Bengali literature, music, and art, showing Bengal's rich cultural heritage, often using humour and satire to critique societal norms and politics. Graffiti foster a sense of community among students, sparking discussions and debates. Campus walls transform into powerful platforms for students to voice their concerns, advocate for their rights, and demand change.

Figure 28. Students have made graffiti on the college walls and hostel to convey their message. (Express photo: Shashi Ghosh)

This peaceful form of protest amplifies the voices of marginalized communities, challenging unjust policies and fostering a culture of activism, empathy, and social responsibility. This ephemeral art form is often temporary, with new pieces emerging and old ones being painted over, reflecting the dynamic nature of student life, particularly in institutions like Presidency University, Jadavpur University, and Calcutta University.

Figure 29. (Photograph collected from a Facebook page named Jadavpur University)

Navigating the lanes of Kolkata's college campuses, one is struck by the vibrant wall posters, artwork, and slogans that punctuate the landscape. These visual declarations, crafted by student organizations, reflect their commitment to diverse political ideologies, equality, freedom, and student rights. This vibrant landscape has become a defining feature of Kolkata's student politics, converting college walls into a dynamic forum for passionate debate, activism, and civic engagement. This topic delves into the visual narrative of Kolkata's college campuses, using the graffiti of Presidency University and Jadavpur University as a case study, to explore how students navigate and reclaim space, exercise democratic rights, through proactive political involvement, social activism, and community-driven concerns.

A deep study of the graffiti in the campus of both the university walls telling numerous stories and events happening with the subtle history of the ex-students which is carried forward by the upcoming generation as a process which is ongoing for many years and still continue get going with newer innovations, interactions and inspirations.

CHAPTER 2:

EXPLORATION OF GRAFFITI IN PRESIDENCY UNIVERCITY

Presidency University, established in 1817, as 'Hindoo College' which started as a non-government college for the sons of Hindu community. It was the earliest institution to introduce Western Education of higher learning in Asia. Later in 1855, it was transformed into the 'Presidency College of Bengal' when it got affiliated to The Calcutta University and became a government institution adopting secularism and admitting students from all communities. In 1944, it also began admitting girls and became a co-educational institution. Finally on 23rd July 2010, after completing all the legal formalities, Presidency College become a full university.[10]

However, the campus known as Presidency University today bears a vibrant legacy of graffiti born from the fiery passion of student activism and the unbridled spirit of political expression. This can be dated back to 1960s-1980s when, Presidency College was a hub of student activism, with many students participating in various student-fronts of Communist movement. The campus walls – both outside and inside -- were used as a space to express political ideologies, slogans, and related artworks.

Figure 30. A CPI(M) Graffiti by Bipul Guha

[10] About Presidency, The Presidency University
https://www.presiuniv.ac.in/web/presidency_history.php

For example, '*Subodh tui paliye ja*' (i.e., Subodh you run away) was a cult graffiti series that came from Bangladesh and was painted by an anonymous artist tag '*Hobeki?*' (i.e., will it be?). A bold, black-ink drawing of a cage entrapping a bright yellow or red sun. The cage, rendered in thick, bold lines, is held by an anonymous boy, conveying a powerful message of oppression and longing for freedom. Later on, it was revealed to be some Saumyadeep Goswami, who was behind this initiation on the wall of Baker's Building, writing in bold, red or black letters, often executed with wall paints or spray paints which was first of its kind in independent India.

Figure 31. Graffiti of 'Subodh tui paliye ja' in an anonymous wall.

"Smash Imperialism", another example of bold red-painted slogans written all over the campus around 1970s reflects the ideology of students against imperialism. The hasty, yet assured, brushstrokes seem to flow effortlessly, as if driven by a sense of urgency and passion. The spontaneous, almost instinctual, quality of the handwriting conveys a sense of unshakeable confidence, leaving an indelible mark on the viewer.

Around late 1980-2000 'Marx, Mao, and More' pronounced a declaration of intellectual curiosity, where students' fascination with radical ideologies, delving into the revolutionary theories beyond Marxism and Maoism can be seen in the campus. [11]

By 2010s, the graffiti landscape became more diverse, with the emergence of feminist, queer, and environmental themes, as well as anti-capitalist and anti-corporate sentiments. This shift was accompanied by a linguistic diversification, with messages in English and Hindi appearing alongside Bengali, reflecting the increasingly cosmopolitan and multilingual character of the student community. The main building walls were fully covered with multiple and unique graffiti showing a cluster of students following many different ideologies and theories.

[11] Bishwabijoy Mitra, April 2, 2018

For Example, slogans like ‘Iye desh hamari apki, Nahi kisike baap ki’, ‘RAISE YOUR VOICE, NOT THE SEA LEVEL’, ‘SANGHARSH, Why Socialism?’, and many more. These provocative slogans, often emblazoned in bold black and red hues, showcasing a range of styles, from deliberate and elegant calligraphy to spontaneous and free-flowing script. In recent years, the medium has shifted on white sheets of paper typically penned, then plastered across campus walls, creating a visually striking and thought-provoking display of student activism (Ref Pic 30,31&32)

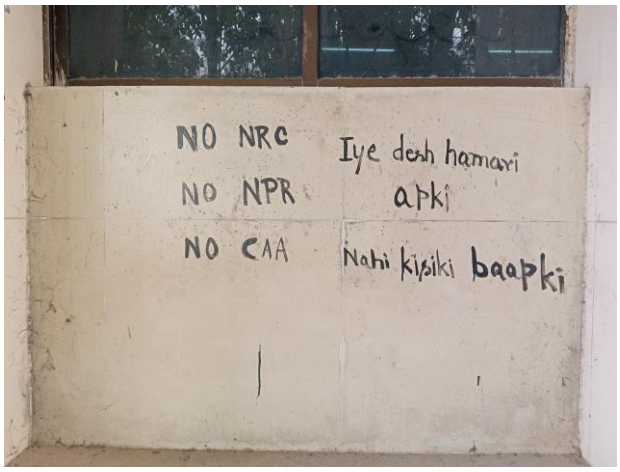

Figure 32. Graffiti at Presidency University

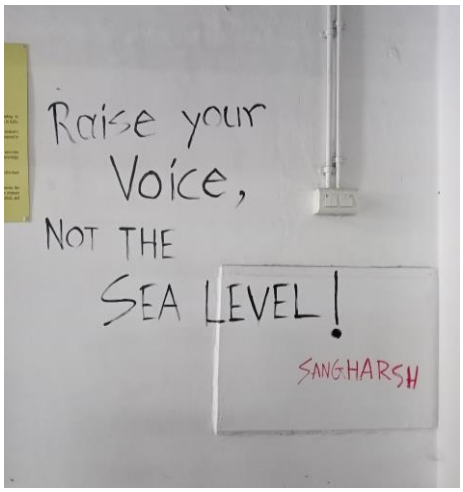

Figure 33. Graffiti at Presidency University

Figure 34. Graffiti at Presidency University

One striking image depicts a boy sitting with a powerful slogan: "Keep your coins, I want Change", embodies the desire for systemic transformation of minority community students who demand an inclusive and equitable environment. This graffiti on the historic walls of the main heritage building, made a bold statement. Crafted using stencil and black paint, the image was a inspiration from a very famous graffiti artist Banksy, which depicted a young boy seated with a poster clutched in his hand, which says, ‘keep your coins I want change’ in vibrant bold red letters.

Figure 35. Graffiti in Presidency University

On the backside of the main building, we can see a graffiti showcases a girl with two wings, symbolizing the dual strengths of femininity: inner peace and unyielding resilience. In stark contrast, another graffiti features a girl sitting with her head bowed down, poignantly capturing the harsh realities faced by women in today's society. This evocative image serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggles for gender equality and justice. Executed with artistic flair, both the artworks showcase a masterful blend of spray paints and black wall paint. The smooth, fluid lines and brushstrokes belie a deeper sense of strength and conviction infusing the pieces with a powerful emotional resonance.

Figure 36. Backside wall of Jadavpur university.

Figure 37. Walls of Netaji building in JU.

A poignant graffiti adorns the walls of the University, featuring a hauntingly powerful image of a man and woman clad in oxygen masks, standing together in a war-torn landscape, their hands clasped in a symbol of love and solidarity. This evocative image, crafted by a collective of anonymous artists without formal training, conveys a profound message: that love can be a potent antidote to the devastation of war. Made out of acrylic and wall paints, the image shows a perfect blend of colours to sense the tension of the situation.[12]

Figure 38. Graffiti in Presidency Library Building

[12] Somerik Charan, March 2025

The painting of a raised fist with the word ‘AZADI’ covering a large part of presidency University staircase where Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose has his famed run-in with professor Orten 104 years ago has emerged as one of the representative symbols of the Kolkata student community’s CAA pushback. The 20-foot-long painting was made in 13 hours by 4 students on 23rd January on the occasion of birth anniversary of Netaji.[13] (Ref image 1) A vibrant hand, rendered in warm yellow and bold red hues, serves as a potent symbol of resistance. Emblazoned with the tag '*Azadi*', the artwork showcases the creator's attention to detail and mastery of design. The carefully chosen colour palette and typography converge to form a visually striking representation, amplifying the powerful message of freedom and liberation that '*Azadi*' embodies.

Figure 39. AZADI on the Staircase of the Netaji Subhash main building

Students across various disciplines used their department walls into a storytelling canvas. Life Science students have painted a long graffiti through the walls near the staircase showing recent concerns regarding nature and its conservation. The Bangla department has decorated its pathway with colourful rangolis and patterns. The driveway inside the campus also has a lot to tell us, as the entire stretch is covered with various slogans and images done by the students.

[13] Times of India, January 28, 2020.

Figure 40. Graffiti on the Life Science Department.

Figure 41. Graffiti on the Life Science Department.

The Covid-19 pandemic marked a turning point in the graffiti culture at the institution. When the campus reopened in 2021, a new wave of students arrived, unfamiliar with the earlier tradition and uninterested in carrying it forward. The proliferation of social media had also contributed to a shift in student priorities, with many becoming increasingly self-focused and disconnected from their peers and the university community. Meanwhile, the university authorities systematically removed the older graffiti, replacing them with new paintings, which not only erased the historical narratives but also silenced the voices of the current generation. As a result, the urgency and need for graffiti as a means of expression and activism slowly appears to be fading away, narrowing down the room for the students to express their vision, aspiration and experiences.[14]

Figure 42. Walls filled with posters Infront of Cafeteria in Presidency University.

[14] Dutta Anirudh, 3rd march 2025.

A PG student from the university states that the absence of a student body or union since 2019 has severely impacted the artistic expression of students. Without a unified representative body, students struggle to secure funding for graffiti projects, and many are intimidated from creating new works. Moreover, the university authorities have been systematically removing politically charged graffiti from the campus, whitewashed the walls and posting digital posters related to educational and aesthetic themes. This, the student argues, serves as a form of censorship, obscuring the harsh realities faced by students and perpetuating a sanitized narrative. Despite the artistic and cultural significance of graffiti, the authorities persist in viewing it as mere vandalism, leading to the erasure of important political statements. He also states that there are plenty of students who discard this tradition of graffiti and go ahead with the beautification of the campus by making murals and ornamental patterns. [15]

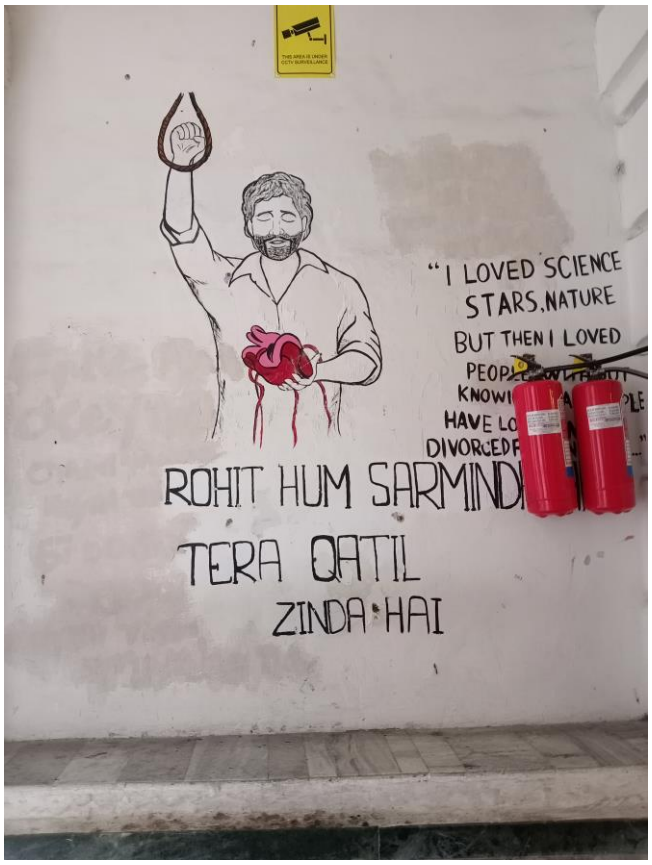

Figure 43. Graffiti on the Netaji building in Presidency University.

Another student, who migrated from another University, claims that he got a new exposure to the culture of graffiti in the campus. Presidency University has provided him a platform, where students are encouraged to express their opinions through multiple mediums. He states that the walls are open to all where every individual or community can come and express their thoughts independently. For examples, we can see Bengali Songs and English poems written, with many

[15] Charan Somerik, 3rd march 2025.

other portraits of their idols like Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Einstein, Charlie Chaplin and fictional characters like Sherlock Holmes and others. Many of the slogans, however, were also written in foreign languages like French. (ref. pic 1,2,3) By analysing the graffities one can see the mixture of thoughts and cultures of the students involved in it.[16]

Figure 44. Graffiti near the staircase of main building of presidency University.

Figure 45. Graffiti on the walls of Netaji Building

Figure 46. Graffiti on the walls of Netaji Building

Figure 47. Graffiti on the walls of Netaji Building

Even the campus floors and pathways bear testament to the students' fervent expressions, with graffiti and slogans partially covering the surfaces, created during passionate protests and rallies. Though these markings are slowly fading away due to heavy foot traffic, they remain a

[16] Das Rohit, 3rd march 2025

significant part of the students' protest legacy, serving as a reminder of their unwavering commitment to their causes. (Ref image 48&49)

“In recent period graffiti can be art and a means of protest,” said Arindam Dolai, the General Secretary of Presidency University Students’ Union. He proclaimed, “Graffiti is a part of our politics. During all the protests that have been erupted in our campus, graffiti played a very important role.” He insists that students can protest and paint on other walls but not the heritage structure.[17]

Smriti Goyal, a postgraduate student claimed that, the authorities have refused to have any conversations with the students regarding their issues, thus graffiti is the only option left for the students to raise their voice and concerns through the walls of the campus.

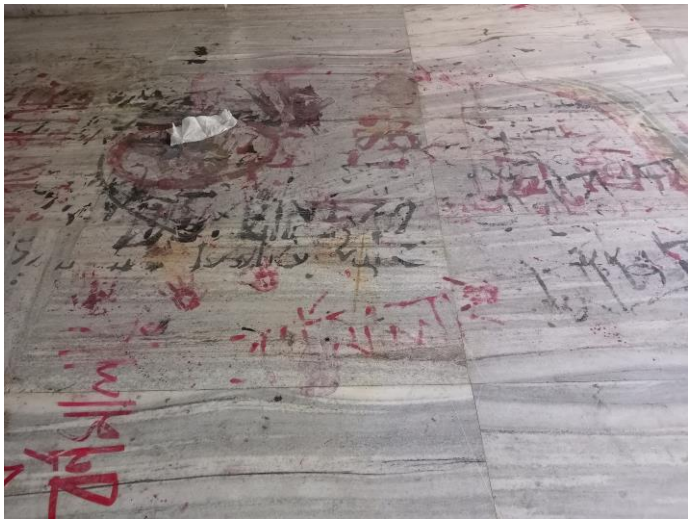

Figure 48. Graffiti on the pathways in Presidency University

Figure 49. Graffiti on roods inside the campus of Presidency University

The Eden Hindu Hostel for boys at Presidency University has a rich history of graffiti, dating back to its early days. Anirudh notes that seniors have created numerous graffiti and slogans on the hostel walls, with each room telling a unique story and highlighting a new concern. Juniors have carried forward this tradition, decorating their rooms with graffiti and slogans that give voice to their inner thoughts and unresolved issues. Interestingly, some students have recreated graffiti that was removed from the university walls, re-making them on the hostel walls. This act of defiance shows that the concerns raised by the students are still unresolved and that they will

[17] Chowdhary Subhankar, 23rd February 2017

continue to protest until the authorities provide a solution. Interestingly, some students have recreated graffiti that was removed from the university walls, re-making them on the hostel walls. This act of defiance shows that the concerns raised by the students are still unresolved and that they will continue to protest until the authorities provide a solution.

The hostel walls showcase a vibrant array of graffiti, predominantly created with bold black paint or charcoal. These artworks express a range of themes, including self-love, existentialism, art, environmental concerns, and portraits of inspirational celebrities. One standout piece, crafted with black charcoal and paint, depicts a hand holding a heart together, poignantly conveying the ache of loneliness. Slogans advocating for revolution, including the iconic phrase "Long Live Revolution," are also emblazoned on the walls, reflecting the students' passion for social change. The graffiti showcase a diverse range of artistic skills, from intricate, multi-coloured patterns to bold, expressive brushstrokes, highlighting the students' eagerness to express their innermost thoughts and feelings.

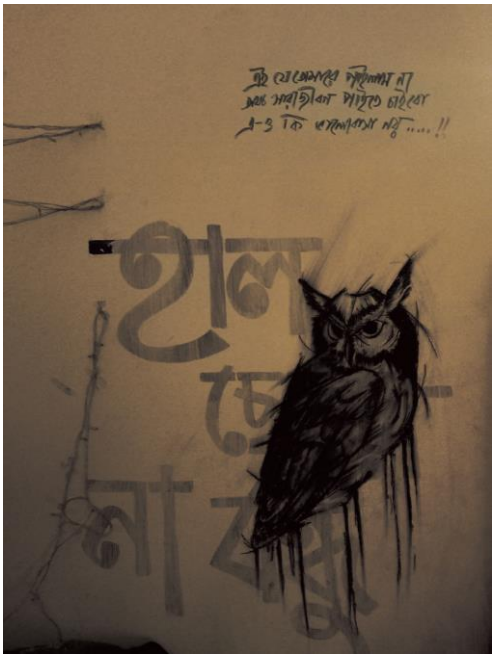

Figure 50. Graffiti on the Hindu hostel walls

Figure 51. Graffiti on the Hindu hostel walls

These graffiti have been an integral part of the hostel's culture for years, serving as a powerful motivator for new students. They provide a unique platform for students to express their thoughts, emotions, and inner voices, encouraging them to speak out against social injustices in a peaceful and non-violent manner. By preserving these graffiti, the hostel continues to inspire generations of students to find their voice, challenge the status quo, and become active participants in shaping a more just and equitable society.

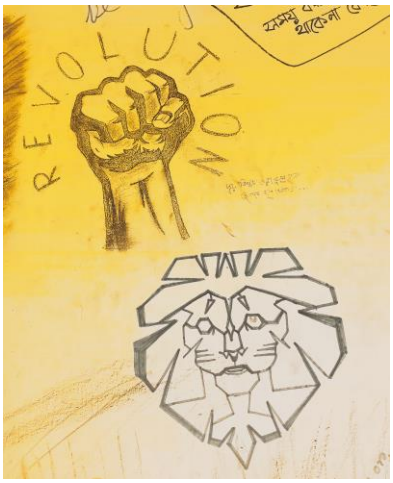

Figure 52. Graffiti on the Hindu hostel walls

Figure 53. Graffiti on the Hindu hostel walls

Fig 54. Graffiti on the Hindu hostel walls

The walls of Presidency University and its constituent hostels stand as a testament to the power of student activism and artistic expression. As the university continues to evolve, the graffiti tradition remains an integral part of its identity. It serves as a reminder of the students' unwavering commitment to social justice, intellectual curiosity, and artistic expression. As the university navigates the complexities of the modern era, the graffiti tradition remains a powerful symbol of student empowerment, creativity, and resistance. Despite the challenges and censorship faced by students, the tradition of graffiti continues to thrive, the students' voices continue to resonate through the walls, inspiring future generations to carry forward the legacy of activism and creativity.

CHAPTER 3:

EXPLORATION OF GRAFFITI IN JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

Jadavpur University's history is deeply rooted in India's freedom movement dating back to the *Swadeshi* movement during 1905-1906. Amidst the turmoil of a divided Bengal, a new era of resistance emerged, while education had to play a new role in this changed scenario. The National Council of Education (NCE) was born, aiming to propagate the nationalist spirit through education. By 1910, the society for the Promotion of the Technical Education in Bengal merged with the NCE, bringing the Bengal Technical Institute (later College of Engineering and Technology in Bengal) under its roof. Post-independence the government of West Bengal, with the concurrence of the Govt. of India, established the College of Engineering and Technology in Bengal as Jadavpur University on December 24, 1955.[18]

During the 1960s-1970s, many of the youth actively participated in the Naxalite movement by writing on the walls of Jadavpur University which became an act of political dissent. Posters and slogans on campus walls became one of the significant ways to communicate with the masses.[19] With a political students' body, the wall posters, arts, and slogans that are regularly imprinted by abundant student organizations to show their commitment to the diverse political ideologies, their striving for equality, their passion for freedom, and their rights as students. They expressed their fervent ideologies through bold, handmade graffiti and slogans like 'Lal Salam,' "Inquilab Zindabad", "Marx, Lenin, Mao" etc. across campus walls. The slogans scrawled in bold, urgent strokes of red and black clearly shows a sense of tension and urgency. The aggressive, hasty calligraphy conveyed the significance of the era, with no time to express their sentiments. The visuals give a direct unflinching communication with the viewer, drawing them into the enthusiastic spirit of the time.

Figure 55. Adjacent wall near Jadavpur University in the early 21st century.

[18] Jadavpur university
https://jadavpuruniversity.in/about/history/
[19] Talukdar Amartya, March 31, 2016

Figure 56. Written in the walls of Union Room

Figure 57. Written on the top of Union Room

The aggression and anger were so high in Jadavpur university that on 30th December 1970, University witnessed a horrific incident that shook the entire campus. The Vice Chancellor was tragically stabbed to death by a group of five unidentified students, allegedly supporters of the Naxalite movement. This brutal attack sent shockwaves throughout the university, leaving the community stunned and alarmed.[20]

Anti-war sentiments were also vociferously expressed, like '*Yankee go home*' and '*Ho Chi Minh Zindabadh*', emblazoned across campus walls, reflecting the university's strong anti-imperialist stance. Similarly, during the Bangladesh liberation war, graffiti proclaimed '*Amra Tomar Songi*' (We Are with You) demonstrating solidity with the people of Bangladesh. While caricatures of politicians and social commentary on issues like poverty and inequality added to the visual tapestry. These graffities and portraits were often made in bold, red colours which continue to serve as a powerful reminder of the university's commitment to peace, justice and human rights.

Figure 58. A poster sticks on an old window of Jadavpur.

Figure 59. Political graffiti on the walls of Jadavpur.

[20] Bhattacharya Amit, 18TH November 2023.

In 2014, the student protest *Hok Kolorob* (Let there be Clamour) that ran for four months was one of the most impactful student movements of its time. The diverse cultural manifestation of the protest included a large oeuvre of posters, graffiti on university walls.[21] The walls transformed into a vibrant canvas of protest art, as students expressed their outrage against the university administration and the police crackdown. During the protest, students made a powerful statement by wearing black badges and burning effigies of the then Vice Chancellor, while shouting slogans demanding his resignation. Music became a symbol of their peaceful protest, with guitars, violins, and other instruments incorporated into graffiti, posters, and visual materials.[22] Slogans like "Hok Kolorob" (Let the voice raise), "No to Police Brutality", and "Autonomy for JU" became rallying cries, while caricatures of protesting students with "Hok Kolorob" emblazoned across their open mouths conveyed the urgency and anger behind their demand.

Figure 60. Graffiti during Hok Kolorob movement in Jadavpur university

Figure 61. Graffiti during Hok Kolorob movement in Jadavpur university

[21] Roy Debopriya, UG student of Jadavpur University.
[22] IBN Live, 16th October 2014

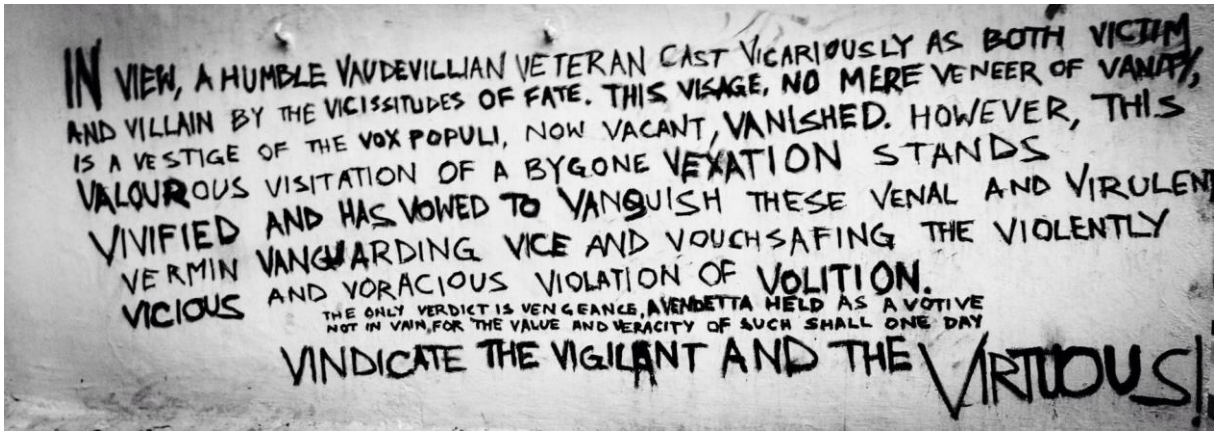
IN VIEW, A HUMBLE VAUDEVILLIAN VETERAN CAST VICARIOUSLY AS BOTH VICTIM AND VILLAIN BY THE VICISSITUDES OF FATE. THIS VISAGE, NO MERE VENEER OF VANITY, IS A VESTIGE OF THE VOX POPULI, NOW VACANT, VANISHED. HOWEVER, THIS VALOUROUS VISITATION OF A BYGONE VEXATION STANDS VIVIFIED AND HAS VOWED TO VANQUISH THESE VENAL AND VIRULENT VERMIN VANGUARDING VICE AND VOUCHSAFING THE VIOLENTLY VICIOUS AND VORACIOUS VIOLATION OF VOLITION.
THE ONLY VERDICT IS VENGEANCE, A VENDETTA HELD AS A VOTIVE NOT IN VAIN, FOR THE VALUE AND VERACITY OF SUCH SHALL ONE DAY
VINDICATE THE VIGILANT AND THE VIRTUOUS!

Figure 62. Graffiti during Hok Kolorob movement in Jadavpur university

Fig 63. Graffiti during Hok Kolorob movement in Jadavpur university

Three years after the Hok Kolorob movement, the West Bengal government's decision to replace campus political unions with apolitical student councils sparked widespread resistance among students. In protest, Jadavpur University students organized demonstrations on campus, leveraging graffiti and other visual language such as slogans, paintings etc. to express their discontent. Graffiti slogans like "Hok Union" (Let there be union) and "No to Apolitical Council" plastered on campus walls, echoed the sentiments of Hok Kolorob. Caricatures of students united against the government's decision, alongside symbols of resistance and democracy, reinforced the narrative of student power and autonomy. In 2017, large graffiti with stencil and spray paint depicting a young man running with caged sun started appearing on the walls of different places interestingly spunk up in the walls of Jadavpur during the *HokUnion* movement as well. [23]

[23] Roy Debopriya, 25th March 2025.

Fig 64. Photograph Collected from the public Facebook post by Rimi. B Chatterjee, 2014

Fig 65. Clicked in October 2021. The charcoal graffiti from 2018 is overridden with posters.

Gandhi Bhavan, the hub of cultural events at Jadavpur University, boasts an incredible artwork at its entrance, crafted by the skilled artist Sumantra Mukherjee. This stunning painting pays tribute to India's brave freedom fighters, with the iconic slogan "Do or Die" prominently displayed at its centre. The artwork was specifically designed for the historic Congress seminar held at the university.[24] The graffiti, made from black wall paint, showcases portraits of eight great political leaders who fought for India's independence. These portraits are strategically placed at the edges of a star-like design, adding to the artwork's visual appeal. The bold lines and meticulous details reflect the artist's exceptional talent and dedication toward showcasing the importance of our history.

[24] Mukherjee Sumantra, 16th august 2024.

Fig 66. Graffiti on Gandhi Bhavan from the portfolio of Sumantra Mukharjee.

In 2020, six students from Jadavpur University's English department, calling themselves "The Graffiti Joint," created a groundbreaking Braille graffiti. The team consisted of Anik Mandal, Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, Emon Bhattacharya, Manikankana Sengupta, Subhradeep Chatterjee, and Utsa Ghosh. Inspired by European artist "The Blind," who created similar Braille graffiti in Vienna, Paris, and Budapest, the students aimed to promote cultural accessibility for the visually disabled ones. Their primary goal was to make cultural elements accessible to visually disabled stakeholders and visitors. The first Braille graffiti, located near the UG building staircase, featured the word "subaltern," symbolizing the marginalization of disabled individuals. "We called it 'subaltern' as disabled people are subaltern in many ways". The team created the graffiti without permission which somehow resulted in tampering of the artwork. So, they decided to make something more durable with the approval of the authority. The second piece 'Look' was then made inside the UG building of English department using cement and tennis balls to ensure more durability and easy to assess for every individual and onlookers. The Braille graffiti initiative fosters communication between the visually abled and disabled, as the presence of the graffiti is shared with visually disabled individuals, allowing them to read and interpret the message.[25]

[25] Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, Subhradeep Chatterjee, Utsa Ghosh, 19th march 2020.

Figure 67. Braille Graffiti in Jadavpur University

Figure 68. Prof. Ishan Chakraborty with the Braille Graffiti.

Inspired by the braille graffiti project 'The Graffiti Joint' at Jadavpur University, two postgraduate students created a braille map on their own initiative. The university's vice-chancellor claims this to be the first time in India, where a braille map has been created on a university campus. Initially started as a class project, it evolved into a huge success, enabling visually impaired students to better navigate and understand their campus environment.[26]

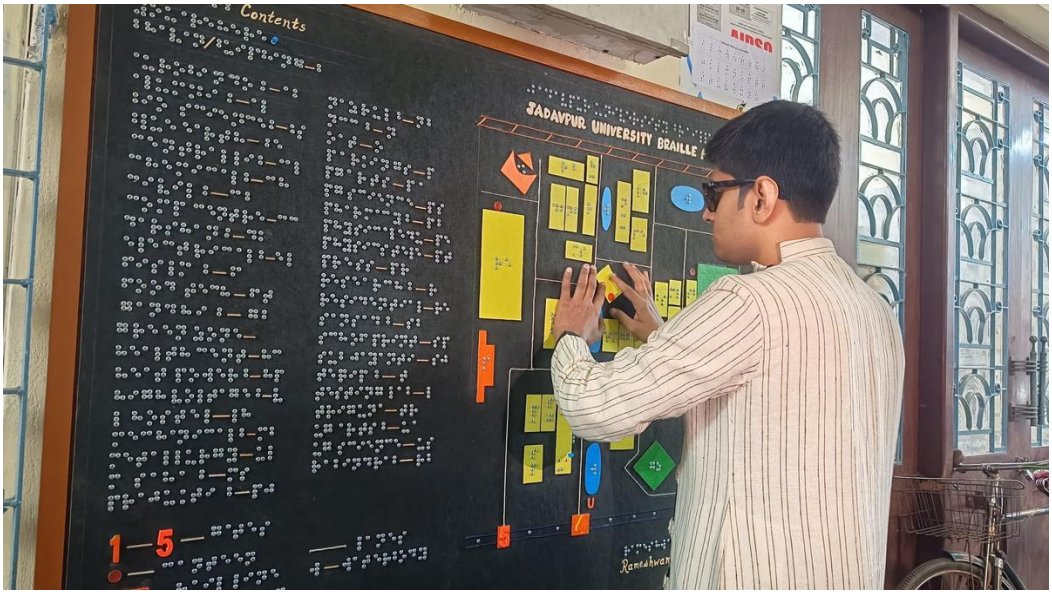

Figure 69. A tactile campus navigation map entirely in Braille created by students of Jadavpur University.

[26] ETV Bharat, 19th November 2024.

In 2021, Jadavpur University gained international attention, thanks to a striking graffiti of the Dali mask, a nod to the popular TV series "Money Heist." The masterpiece was crafted by Aratrika Basu, a second-year master's student in philosophy. By combining the iconic mask with the slogan "La Resistencia," Basu paid tribute to the show while highlighting the university's history of student resistance against authority. The graffiti became a powerful symbol of the ongoing struggle for student autonomy and freedom at Jadavpur University. Sadly, the iconic Dali mask graffiti was erased from the university walls due to an inspection by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The authorities, disconnect from student sentiment, viewed the graffiti as nothing more than vandalism.[27] Artist Aratrika Basu's iconic Dali mask was a labor of love, completed in just one day after 8-9 hours of meticulous work, assisted by her colleague. Initially, some onlookers expressed discontent, saying "abar dewal nongra korchis" (you're dirtying the walls again). Aratrika responded with a wa'm smile, saying 'trying to make it more beautiful.'[28]

Figure 70. Dali mask Graffiti on the walls of Jadavpur University.

Many other vibrant graffiti artworks surrounded by the walls of the Jadavpur University convey students' protests and demands for change. One striking example adorns the wall above the Postgraduate Arts Building gate, showcasing a colourful, frequently reworked graffiti that reflects the students' ongoing resistance. Another black-painted graffiti on a wall of Aurobindo

[27] Lygeia Gomes, 13th September 2021.
[28] Aratrika Basu, 20th march 2025.

Bhavan, the university's main administrative building, delivers a powerful message, showing image of a woman with a hand clasped around her neck symbolizes the terror and violence inflicted upon women, specifically highlighting the issues of rape and murder. Another thought-provoking graffiti housing the Vice-Chancellor's office, has borne witness to numerous protests and rallies that have shaped the university's history. The graffiti depicts a boy scrubbing the floor, accompanied by the slogan "Education, take this system." This image encapsulates the students' desire to dismantle the existing power structures and create a more just and equitable society through education.[29]

Fig 70. Graffiti on PG arts building in Jadavpur University.

Figure 71. Graffiti on the backside of Jadavpur University boundary wall.

Figure 72. Graffiti on the Vice-Chancellors office in Jadavpur University.

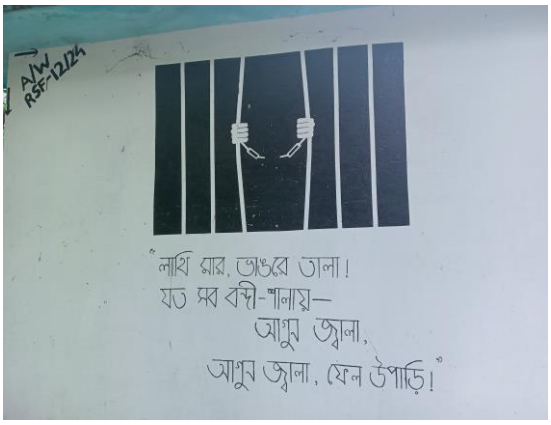

Figure 73. Graffiti on the walls Infront of PhD building in Jadavpur University.

[29] Chakraborty Sharanya, 5th December 2021.

A poignant graffiti, crafted by the Arts Faculty Student Union, powerfully conveys the urgent need for protection against sexual harassment. Executed in bold red and black wall paints, the artwork features the silhouette of a girl with a distraught expression, her face and body engulfed by numerous red hands. This haunting imagery vividly captures the terror and vulnerability faced by women in today's society. Adjacent to the artwork, a compelling message is emblazoned in bold black letters, emphasizing the imperative need for a Gender Sensitization Committee to combat sexual harassment. Adjacent to the wall, another poignant graffiti captures the attention, depicting a hand grasping the prison bars, with a broken handcuff dangling limply. This powerful image serves as a potent symbol of resistance, freedom, and the unyielding human spirit made out of black paint on the newly whitewashed wall.

Figure 74. Graffiti on the wall near the Arts Building of Jadavpur University.

Figure 75. Graffiti in front of gate number 2 of Jadavpur University.

A recent graffiti artwork at Jadavpur University has sparked controversy, featuring slogans like “Free Palestine” and “Azad Kashmir,” was painted on a wall near Gate 3, depicting a hand holding flowers tied with barbed wire. The Kolkata Police have filed an FIR against supporters of a left-wing student organization, alleging that they created the graffiti. The police claim that students are damaging university property, insulting the national flag, and promoting anti-national sentiments. The graffiti’s bold graphics and imagery aim to convey the message of Kashmiri resistance and resilience. Interestingly, this artwork emerged during the RG Kar case, near the main road in Jadavpur University with students protesting and demanding for safety and justice. Students and faculty have protested the alleged presence of plainclothes police on campus, demanding campus safety and an end to what they call intimidation by the ruling TMC and state administration.[30]

Figure 76. Graffiti in black proclaiming 'Azad Kashmir' and 'Free Palestine' was seen on a wall near gate number three of the university. (X/Dilip Gosh)

According to a Jadavpur University student, the campus's graffiti scene has undergone a significant transformation. Students have expanded their creative expression beyond traditional political themes, exploring genres like literature, sexuality, art, and social issues. Self-expression has evolved, with students now writing songs, poems, and creating nature-inspired graffiti that showcases a cultural connection with the environment. Also, post-COVID, students have discovered innovative ways to express themselves, including digital art and posters, which are gaining popularity on campus. However, many students continue to follow in their seniors' footsteps, preserving the tradition of wall writing and graffiti to voice concerns about ongoing political crises and share opinions on pressing issues. They still write on the walls with those bold black and red colours showing that there are many serious topics that are to be discussed

[30] Ghosh Dawaipayan, 11th march 2025.

and portrayed in front of the authority. He believed that the merging of these different ideas and concept makes the university walls culturally rich and divers from many other universities.

Figure 77. Graffiti on the walls of Jadavpur University.

Figure 78. Graffiti by the Lefties students on the wall.

A postgraduate student from Jadavpur University lamented that the systematic removal of graffiti and slogans has had a chilling effect on student expression. Many students are now hesitant to write on the walls, fearing repercussions or backlash from authorities. Instead, some students have resorted to creating decorative patterns and drawings, devoid of any meaningful messages or emotional resonance. This shift is symptomatic of a broader decline in student activism and union culture, as the newer generation becomes increasingly self-absorbed and disconnected from the university community and its rich history of student-led movements.

The student organisation not only paint the walls but also put posters on them offering a dynamic and frequently updated medium for expression. As posters are removed or overlaid with new ones, it creates a visual noise due to contrasting messages from different groups. Amidst this ever-changing landscape, students and faculty navigate the university, encounter innumerable messages every day which change regularly. These changes on the walls coupled with the movement of the people create a sense of floating messages.

Figure 79. Graffiti on Arts by the amphitheatre in Jadavpur University.

WOMEN WILL ONLY BECOME FREE AND EQUAL IN A WORLD WHERE LABOUR HAS BEEN SOCIALISED AND COMMUNISM HAS BEEN VICTORIOUS
- KOLLONTAI
BREAK ALL SHACKLE WITH REDS
NAYA DISHA

Figure 80. Graffiti by the Left-wing students on the walls of amphitheatre in Jadavpur University.

The Union Room at Jadavpur University is a vibrant hub of creative expression, where students gather to convey their thoughts, ideas, and passions through various art forms. The room's walls are transformed into a kaleidoscope of colours, textures, and emotions, as students use paintbrushes, colour pens, charcoals, and other mediums to express themselves. The walls, a canvas of transient expression, bear witness to the dynamic interplay between creation and erasure. Whitewashed quotes, once bold and defiant, now subtly whisper their presence, as new layers of thought and ideology are boldly inscribed in crimson hues. This iterative process of effacement and re-inscription generates a multilayered landscape, where the stratified layers of writing become an archaeological record of the wall's history. The transience of graffiti itself becomes an art form, a happening that unfolds through the relentless cycle of creation, erasure, and rebirth. It showcases a diverse range of artistic styles, from elegant calligraphy to hasty handwriting, and from bold red and black hues to subtle pastel shades. As the room's walls whisper stories of resistance, creativity, and freedom, they remind us that "the brushstrokes of rebellion can be just as powerful as the strokes of silence."

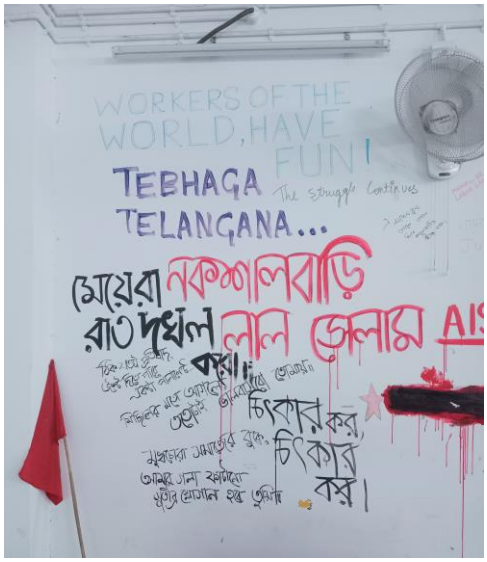

Figure 81. Writings on the walls of Union room in Jadavpur University near gate no. 3

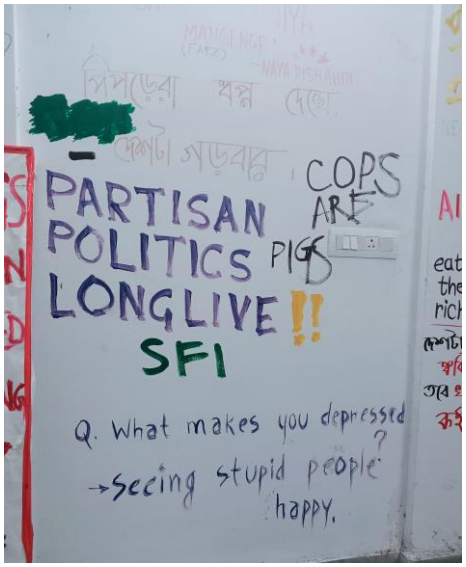

Figure 82. Writings on the walls of Union room in Jadavpur University near gate no. 3

Figure 83. Political graffiti in Union room of Jadavpur University

Figure 84. Political graffiti in Union room of Jadavpur University

Figure 85. Graffiti outside the old union room of Jadavpur University.

Figure 86. Influential graffiti by the SFI union group students in the walls of Jadavpur university.

The walls of Jadavpur University stand as a testament to the power of student activism, creativity, and resistance. For decades, these walls have borne witness to the evolving landscape of student politics, social movements, and cultural expression. From the bold graffiti of the Naxalite era to the contemporary digital art and posters, the university's walls have served as a canvas for students to voice their concerns, challenge authority, and celebrate their diversity. As we gaze upon the vibrant walls of Jadavpur University, we are reminded that even in the face of adversity, the power of creativity, resistance, and collective action can inspire transformative change.

CHAPTER 4:

UNIVERSITY GRAFFITY IN CONTEMPORARY KOLKATA: REFLECTIONS AND REACTIONS

Since late twentieth century, the students Presidency – first College and later University – and Jadavpur have multiple ideologies and beliefs which led to diverse kind of slogans and graffiti on the walls of the campus. The primary purpose of doing these graffiti were expressions of political opinions and demands as per their political ideas and supports to any particular ideology. Graffiti thus plays an important role during any protest or gatherings done by the students regarding their unresolved issues and showcasing their political ideologies.

For years, some enthusiastic group of students has always been there to create vibrant and bold graffiti on the university walls, driven by urgency and passion, which expressed their concerns and tensions through energetic writings on the wall. Some of them display free, bold and spontaneous calligraphy, while others are scribbled in hasty handwriting, conveying the immediacy and intensity of the events, circumstances and their reactions.

Figure 87. Graffiti on the walls of Presidency University

Regular passers-by, frequent onlookers and occasional visitors have often been amazed by the visual output of students' activism. Many of them have tried to capture these visuals through camera, mobile phone etc either as casual clicks, or for serious documentation, or out of aesthetic

appreciation. Being inspired by the iconic graffiti inside the Universities of Presidency and Jadavpur, many outsiders have occasionally created their own large-scale graffiti along the campuses' boundary walls, showing solidarity and appreciation for the students' expressions.

A PhD scholar at Presidency University, one of the artists behind the iconic "Azadi" graffiti, revealed that the raised fist with the word 'AZADI' on the university's main building staircase holds a profound meaning. To them, 'Azadi' represents not only national freedom but also independence to make personal choices, access to education and healthcare for all, freedom from upper-caste and religious majority suppression, and freedom for underprivileged students to live in hostels. The students' enthusiastic support played a significant role in making the artwork a resounding success, showcasing the power of community and collective appreciation for creative expression. [31]

A postgraduate student at Jadavpur University expressed regret over the recent removal of graffiti and slogans from the campus walls, feeling that it had silenced many of the students' voices and restricted their expressions. He continues that, only a small fraction of the university's large student and faculty population participate in creating wall writings and graffiti that were expressing their inner thoughts, concerns, and ideas. They go beyond mere aesthetics, providing a public space where individuals can share their perspectives and connect with others. This form of expression allows students to convey their personal or collective thoughts and emotions, making it a powerful means of communication.

Figure 88. An old graffiti in Presidency University around 2015.

Figure 89. An old graffiti done by the student union group.

[31] Jan 28,2020. 'Times of India'

The graffiti on campus walls is perceived differently by various viewers. Some see it as a legitimate form of art and self-expression, while others view it as nothing more than vandalism. The recent crackdown has threatened many students, who are now reluctant to write on the walls, fearing repercussions from the authorities. As the newer generation becomes increasingly self-absorbed and disconnected from the university community, its rich history of student-led movements gets demolished by time.

Figure 90. Graffiti depicting Frida Karlo with an influence from the west Graffiti culture.

Artist Aratrika Basu's iconic Dali mask at Jadavpur was a stunning artwork, which captivated students, inspiring companion graffiti and slogans that showcased the university's strong sense of community. The mural gained international attention, drawing visitors from afar to admire and photograph it. However, the authorities' decision to remove the beloved image sparked widespread outrage and sadness among students. Many expressed anger and disappointment, lamenting the loss of a cherished work of art. Despite its removal, the artwork continues to receive an outpouring of love and support from students, onlookers, and the community at large.[32]

A new controversy has surfaced at the same campus following the discovery of a graffiti endorsing ‘Azad Kashmir’ and ‘Free Palestine’ on a wall near gate number three. The campus is abuzz with intense debate and finger-pointing among political and student organizations, each

[32] Aratrika Basu, April 2025

denying responsibility for the provocative messages. Kishalay Roy, the TMCP president at Jadavpur, accused the 'ultra-left student outfits' of being behind this controversial graffiti, claiming that more such messages can be found across the campus. The Students Federation of India (SFI) has denied involvement in this incident stating their ideological distances in such 'secessionist views.[33]

Figure 91. Early graffiti on the walls of Jadavpur University

Figure 92. Graffiti made using different medium in the walls of old union room in Jadavpur university.

Indias first ever braille graffiti done by 'The Graffiti Joint', a group of six PG students of Jadavpur University's English department using tennis ball near gate 3. Appraising by professor Ishan Chakraborty, he states that 'In a socio-cultural situation where respect for difference or diversity is increasingly becoming a contested idea, this is a big step towards true inclusion, looking beyond just a surface-level effort to bring everyone in. This, we can say, is one of the many small, step towards cripping the Department of English and making it culturally accessible, which is as important as making it physically accessible to (visually) disabled persons.' [34]

Another unique graffiti project on campus, created by Rameshwar Chakraborty and Astyartha Das, has transformed a class assignment into a meaningful contribution to inclusivity. The duo designed a campus map in Braille, aimed at enhancing accessibility for individuals with visual impairments. This innovative initiative embodies the spirit of 'Access for All.' Professor Ishan Chakraborty, a visually impaired professor of the English Department at the university, was initially sceptical but impressed by the presentation of a campus map on November 18. Having spent six years as a student at the university, he found the map to be a liberating experience, allowing him to visualize the campus in its entirety. The map helped him understand the

[33] The Indian Hawk, 11th March 2025

[34] Mukhopadhyay Chandrima, Chatterjee Subhradeep, Ghosh Utsa. 19th March 2020.

proximity of landmarks, which was previously unclear. This initiative has garnered significant attention from news channels and magazines, and has greatly benefited visually impaired students by providing them with a clearer understanding of the university's layout. Professor Chakraborty praised the project, stating that it marks a significant step towards inclusivity by promoting the rights and visibility of persons with disabilities, ultimately making their lives easier.[35]

There's a mutual awareness and involvement among students from both universities regarding campus activities, fostering a positive and diverse perspective towards each other's institutions. Despite distinct cultures, the graffiti culture unites them through mutual celebration and support. Below, students share their unique experiences and showcase their support and encouragement for one another's universities.

A postgraduate student from Presidency University, who actively participates in student-led movements on campus, states that Jadavpur University students have more opportunities for self-expression due to the diverse range of engineering and medical departments. This diversity fosters different ideologies and forms of expression, which are reflected in the graffiti and writings on campus. The student highlights that Jadavpur University students also focus on social issues, such as the conditions of workers and labourers in West Bengal, and actively protest and show support for causes both within and outside the campus. The graffiti scene was highly influenced by West Coast hip-hop culture, allowing students to explore a wide range of styles and new mediums.[36]

Figure 93. Political graffiti hid by the authorities, placing a new sign board in front of it.

Figure 94. Graffiti on the walls of old canteen in the Presidency University.

[35] Moyurie Som, 21st November 2024
[36] Charan Somerik, March 2025

A final-semester student at Jadavpur University noted that Presidency University has a rich graffiti culture, with renowned artists having paved the way. The students' graffiti is characterized by its directness and simplicity, infused with a unique artistic essence that makes it interactive. Although some of the university's most famous graffiti were removed due to selective erasure by authorities, the culture has been kept alive by alumni who still reside in hostels,[37] or are awaiting their degrees. The legacy endures, with the university walls continuing to convey messages through overwritten graffiti that remain visible to passersby. He notes that students at Jadavpur and Presidency University have the freedom to express their views and concerns on campus walls, providing a platform for them to showcase their imagination and emotions. Despite the removal of some well-known and political graffiti, they continue to write on the walls of the campus to raise awareness among their peers and offer a fresh perspective on the world they navigate.

Hence, the graffiti culture at the universities began as a non-violent form of protest, focusing on written messages to address critical social and political concerns. Initially, the aesthetic and visual aspects were secondary to the urgent need to express these issues. The culture was influenced by Western hip-hop and graffiti, encouraging students to experiment with various methods and visuals to highlight their causes using different materials. These inspirations encouraged the newer generation to transform the campus into a space where individuality flourish alongside a sense of unity and togetherness among all members.

[37] Such as The Hindu Hostel for Boys.

Conclusion

This research journey has explored the vibrant and dynamic world of graffiti in Presidency University and Jadavpur University, Kolkata, highlighting its importance as a means of student expression, a platform for social commentary, and fostering community connections. Through these graffities, students convey their thoughts, emotions, and concerns, which creates a sense of inclusivity and social awareness.

The diverse perspectives and roles of graffiti in Presidency and Jadavpur universities, revealing its significance in personal empowerment, social commentary, and community building. Through a detailed analysis of various graffiti, it traces the evolution of this art form from traditional expressions to a rich, dynamic culture. Students' reactions and reflections on both campuses highlight graffiti's impact as sparking dialogue, debate, and a shared sense of identity within the university community.

The analysis shows a shift towards experimental forms of graffiti, incorporating digital elements, mixed media, and interactive installations, reflecting the changing values and creative preferences of the student community. Graffiti serves as a distinct form of mass communication, with each artist bringing their unique aesthetic to their work often without concern for potential repercussions or visual cohesion. Despite challenges and controversies, graffiti's legacy endures on these campuses, inspiring future generations to express themselves and make their voices heard.

Ultimately, this dissertation underscores the value of graffiti as a legitimate form of artistic expression and social commentary. By giving voice to the experiences, perspectives, and creativity of students, graffiti continues to play a vital role in shaping the cultural landscape of universities, including Presidency University and Jadavpur University.

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GRAFFITI IN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS OF KOLKATA: A STUDY BASED ON PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY AND JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

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Graffiti refers to the act of creating visual art or writing texts, often without permission, on surfaces in the open or in public like walls, buildings, corridors, footpaths, streets etc, as a dynamic form of expression that has evolved since the 1960s in the United States of America. This medium gradually got transformed from vandalism to a powerful medium of self-expression, social commentary, and cultural critique. From the streets of New York to different parts of the world, graffiti has become a dynamic and thought-provoking rendering and tool for diverse cultures creating a sense of community among the youth.

Graffiti in India emerged as a dynamic and expressive form, reflecting the country's diverse culture and socio-political experiences. From the bustling streets of Mumbai to the historic walls of Delhi to the vibrant walls and college campuses of Kolkata, graffiti has become a powerful medium for social commentary and artistic innovations. Particularly in Kolkata, graffiti evolved from its early beginnings in the 1980s as a form of rebellious youth expression, writing the walls of Kolkata to express their political messaging into a vibrant and diverse art form. Initially the practice of wall-writing which has gradually evolved over years as local artists and activists got influenced by the graffiti movement of the West. Over time, graffiti in Kolkata evolved to encompass various subjects, including social issues, environmental concerns, mythology, and daily life experiences.

On college campuses, graffiti serves as a platform for students to express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. It can range from witty humor to poignant social commentary, reflecting the concerns and values of the student community. This dissertation explores the phenomenon of graffiti in Presidency University (previously known as Hindu College, and then Presidency College) and Jadavpur University (initially known as Bengal Engineering College), Kolkata, two prominent institutions known for their rich academic traditions, vibrant student cultures, and histories of activism. These institutions in this context offer a unique panorama for examining the history, evolution and changing role of graffiti in shaping university culture and student identity.

Over time, the graffiti scene in these universities has undergone significant changes, reflecting the evolving concerns and values of the student community. The walls of these institutions serve as canvases for students to express their thoughts, emotions, and opinions on various issues, ranging from social justice and politics to personal experiences and campus life. From simple tags and slogans to intricate murals and thought-provoking installations the art form has become more sophisticated and diverse. The graffiti in these universities not only adds to the aesthetic appeal of the campuses but also provides a unique insight into the minds and perspectives of the students.

This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how students utilize public spaces in Presidency University and Jadavpur University to express their experiences, challenge dominant narratives, and create alternative forms of communication. Furthermore, this study will explore how graffiti reflects and influences the social, cultural, and political contexts of these universities, shedding light on the intricate relationships between art, identity, and power in academic settings.

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Speak Time	7 minute(s)

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Graffiti a form of visual communication derived from an Italian word 'Graffito', meaning drawing or writing scratched on a wall or other surface within public view, some of which still exist in the caves of Lascaux, France and Altamira, Spain. (Figure 1,2&3). Often, it's also described as 'illicit application of a medium to the surface'. They have been found in abundance on the monuments of ancient Egypt. Later, the ancient Greeks and Romans wrote their names and protest poems on building walls and abandon spaces of the city. During the 1930s Great Depression, American workers created "Hobo Graffiti" - a secret communication system using symbols and messages on trains, walls, and public surfaces to share vital information with fellow travelers. . A popular graffiti tag 'KilroWas Here' featuring a bald-headed man peeking over a wall, symbolizing the presence of American soldiers, can be still seen in the Abandoned military bases and bunkers in France and USA. Later in early 1960s, modern Graffiti appeared in Philadelphia, 95 miles away from New York city, where a young man named Darry McCray (CornBread) initially started writing his names to get attention. Gradually he got involved in the process and continued to tag Philadelphia with his name that earned him the name of the father of modern graffiti. By the late 1960s Graffiti reached New York and a new revolution in art took off as people began writing their names, or tags on buildings all over the city. In the early 1970s graffiti started taking shape alongside of the HipHop culture. It became a form of visual expression for the disenfranchised youth, reflecting their social and political realities. Its process however was developing so fast in the cities that by the mid-1970s, it was hard to even see out of subways, trains, or car windows as it was completely covered by spray paintings for example Blade, who got to a lot of fame because of 5000 painted trains known as 'Throw ups,' 'letters,' 'tags,' or 'masterpiece' even 'blockbuster. As a form of visual expression, artists showcased their work publicly because they didn't have access to galleries and art institutions. Despite being considered illegal in many places, Graffiti has flourished underground requiring minimal resources and offering a platform for marginalized voices to express themselves and challenge dominant narratives. On the other hand, visual artist adapted graffiti as a powerful vehicle to articulate their socio-political views, ancestral heritage, and cultural and religious identities. By being in public spaces, it can start important conversations and inspire people to make a difference. Some of the early pioneers of graffiti were, Taki 183 highlighting streets with tags, Keith Hering's iconic pop art-infused graffiti, often featuring radiant babies and dancing figures, radiating joy and energy. Jean-Michel Basdaqiat an artist whose bold fusion of street art and abstract expressionism injected depth, emotion, and social commentary. Vaughn Bode was another famous American comic artist as his cartoon style is still widely admired and copied by many graffiti artists today. Futura 2000 (Lenny McGurr) followed by Bansky introduced an avant-garde, futuristic approach that pushed the boundaries of traditional graffiti by anonymous stencil-based artworks mostly political in nature. In the early phase, artists work into groups called "CREW" who were basically street gangs and groups concerned with marking territories, among which 'The Fabulous 5' was active during the 1970s and 1980s known for their colourful, stylized, and often humorous murals. Graffiti in India is a potpourri of history, rebellion, and contemporary flair. The country's streets have a long history of cultural marking in urban and semi-urban regions with a unique mode of expression. For example, hand-painted movie posters, typographic signboards, decorative motifs patters and writings on lorries, trucks, buses etc, slogans, divine

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Plagiarism Scan Report

0% Plagiarism	0% Exact Match 0% Partial Match
100% Unique	

Words	958
Characters	6439
Sentences	44
Paragraphs	6
Read Time	5 minute(s)
Speak Time	7 minute(s)

Content Checked For Plagiarism

The culture of university graffiti in Kolkata is a vibrant and dynamic aspect of the city's academic and artistic landscape. It reflects students' political views, critiques government policies, and advocates for social justice, while also addressing social issues like gender equality and environmental degradation. It also incorporates element of Bengali literature, music, and art, showing Bengal's rich cultural heritage, often using humour and satire to critique societal norms and politics. Graffiti foster a sense of community among students, sparking discussions and debates. Campus walls transform into powerful platforms for students to voice their concerns, advocate for their rights, and demand change. This peaceful form of protest amplifies the voices of marginalized communities, challenging unjust policies and fostering a culture of activism, empathy, and social responsibility. This ephemeral art form is often temporary, with new pieces emerging and old ones being painted over, reflecting the dynamic nature of student life, particularly in institutions like Presidency University, Jadavpur University, and Calcutta University. Navigating the lanes of Kolkata's college campuses, one is struck by the vibrant wall posters, artwork, and slogans that punctuate the landscape. These visual declarations, crafted by student organizations, reflect their commitment to diverse political ideologies, equality, freedom, and student rights. This vibrant landscape has become a defining feature of Kolkata's student politics, converting college walls into a dynamic forum for passionate debate, activism, and civic engagement. This topic delves into the visual narrative of Kolkata's college campuses, using the graffiti of Presidency University and Jadavpur University as a case study, to explore how students navigate and reclaim space, exercise democratic rights, through proactive political involvement, social activism, and community-driven concerns.

A deep study of the graffiti in the campus of both the university walls telling numerous stories and events happening with the subtle history of the ex-students which is carried forward by the upcoming generation as a process which is ongoing for many years and still continue get going with newer innovations, interactions and inspirations. Presidency University, established in 1817, as 'Hindoo College' which started as a non-government college for the sons of Hindu community. It was the earliest institution to introduce Western Education of higher learning in Asia. Later in 1855, it was transformed into the 'Presidency College of Bengal' when it got affiliated to The Calcutta University and became a government institution adopting secularism and admitting students from all communities. In 1944, it also began admitting girls and became a co-educational institution. Finally on 23rd July 2010, after completing all the legal formalities, Presidency College become a full university.

However, the campus known as Presidency University today bears a vibrant legacy of graffiti born from the fiery passion of student activism and the unbridled spirit of political expression. This can be dated back to 1960s-1980s when, Presidency College was a hub of student activism, with many students participating in various student-fronts of Communist movement. The campus walls – both outside and inside -- were used as a space to express political ideologies, slogans, and related artworks. For example, 'Subodh tui paliye ja' (i.e., Subodh you run away) was a cult graffiti series that came from Bangladesh and was painted by an anonymous artist tag 'Hobeki?' (i.e., will it be?). A bold, black-ink drawing of a cage entrapping a bright yellow or red sun. The cage, rendered in thick, bold lines, is held by an anonymous boy, conveying a powerful

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Unique

Words	944
Characters	6048
Sentences	41
Paragraphs	1
Read Time	5 minute(s)
Speak Time	7 minute(s)

Content Checked For Plagiarism

On the backside of the main building, we can see a graffiti showcases a girl with two wings, symbolizing the dual strengths of femininity: inner peace and unyielding resilience. In stark contrast, another graffiti features a girl sitting with her head bowed down, poignantly capturing the harsh realities faced by women in today's society. This evocative image serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggles for gender equality and justice. Executed with artistic flair, both the artworks showcase a masterful blend of spray paints and black wall paint. The smooth, fluid lines and brushstrokes belie a deeper sense of strength and conviction infusing the pieces with a powerful emotional resonance. A poignant graffiti adorns the walls of the University, featuring a hauntingly powerful image of a man and woman clad in oxygen masks, standing together in a war-torn landscape, their hands clasped in a symbol of love and solidarity. This evocative image, crafted by a collective of anonymous artists without formal training, conveys a profound message: that love can be a potent antidote to the devastation of war. Made out of acrylic and wall paints, the image shows a perfect blend of colours to sense the tension of the situation. The painting of a raised fist with the word 'AZADI' covering a large part of presidency University staircase where Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose has his famed run-in with professor Orten 104 years ago has emerged as one of the representative symbols of the Kolkata student community's CAA pushback. The 20-foot-long painting was made in 13 hours by 4 students on 23rd January on the occasion of birth anniversary of Netaji. (Ref image 1) A vibrant hand, rendered in warm yellow and bold red hues, serves as a potent symbol of resistance. Emblazoned with the tag 'Azadi', the artwork showcases the creator's attention to detail and mastery of design. The carefully chosen colour palette and typography converge to form a visually striking representation, amplifying the powerful message of freedom and liberation that 'Azadi' embodies. Students across various disciplines used their department walls into a storytelling canvas. Life Science students have painted a long graffiti through the walls near the staircase showing recent concerns regarding nature and its conservation. The Bangla department has decorated its pathway with colourful rangolis and patterns. The driveway inside the campus also has a lot to tell us, as the entire stretch is covered with various slogans and images done by the students. The Covid-19 pandemic marked a turning point in the graffiti culture at the institution. When the campus reopened in 2021, a new wave of students arrived, unfamiliar with the earlier tradition and uninterested in carrying it forward. The proliferation of social media had also contributed to a shift in student priorities, with many becoming increasingly self-focused and disconnected from their peers and the university community. Meanwhile, the university authorities systematically removed the older graffiti, replacing them with new paintings, which not only erased the historical narratives but also silenced the voices of the current generation. As a result, the urgency and need for graffiti as a means of expression and activism slowly appears to be fading away, narrowing down the room for the students to express their vision, aspiration and experiences. A PG student from the university states that the absence of a student body or union since 2019 has severely impacted the artistic expression of students. Without a unified representative body, students struggle to secure funding for graffiti projects, and many are intimidated from creating new works. Moreover, the university authorities have been systematically removing politically charged graffiti from the campus, whitewashed the walls and posting digital posters related to educational and aesthetic themes. This, the student argues, serves as a

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2% Plagiarism	0% Exact Match
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98% Unique	

Words	953
Characters	6369
Sentences	42
Paragraphs	3
Read Time	5 minute(s)
Speak Time	7 minute(s)

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Smriti Goyal, a postgraduate student claimed that, the authorities have refused to have any conversations with the students regarding their issues, thus graffiti is the only option left for the students to raise their voice and concerns through the walls of the campus. The Eden Hindu Hostel for boys at Presidency University has a rich history of graffiti, dating back to its early days. Anirudh notes that seniors have created numerous graffiti and slogans on the hostel walls, with each room telling a unique story and highlighting a new concern. Juniors have carried forward this tradition, decorating their rooms with graffiti and slogans that give voice to their inner thoughts and unresolved issues. Interestingly, some students have recreated graffiti that was removed from the university walls, re-making them on the hostel walls. This act of defiance shows that the concerns raised by the students are still unresolved and that they will continue to protest until the authorities provide a solution. Interestingly, some students have recreated graffiti that was removed from the university walls, re-making them on the hostel walls. This act of defiance shows that the concerns raised by the students are still unresolved and that they will continue to protest until the authorities provide a solution. The hostel walls showcase a vibrant array of graffiti, predominantly created with bold black paint or charcoal. These artworks express a range of themes, including self-love, existentialism, art, environmental concerns, and portraits of inspirational celebrities. One standout piece, crafted with black charcoal and paint, depicts a hand holding a heart together, poignantly conveying the ache of loneliness. Slogans advocating for revolution, including the iconic phrase "Long Live Revolution," are also emblazoned on the walls, reflecting the students' passion for social change. The graffiti showcase a diverse range of artistic skills, from intricate, multi-coloured patterns to bold, expressive brushstrokes, highlighting the students' eagerness to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These graffiti have been an integral part of the hostel's culture for years, serving as a powerful motivator for new students. They provide a unique platform for students to express their thoughts, emotions, and inner voices, encouraging them to speak out against social injustices in a peaceful and non-violent manner. By preserving these graffiti, the hostel continues to inspire generations of students to find their voice, challenge the status quo, and become active participants in shaping a more just and equitable society. The walls of Presidency University and its constituent hostels stand as a testament to the power of student activism and artistic expression. As the university continues to evolve, the graffiti tradition remains an integral part of its identity. It serves as a reminder of the students' unwavering commitment to social justice, intellectual curiosity, and artistic expression. As the university navigates the complexities of the modern era, the graffiti tradition remains a powerful symbol of student empowerment, creativity, and resistance. Despite the challenges and censorship faced by students, the tradition of graffiti continues to thrive, the students' voices continue to resonate through the walls, inspiring future generations to carry forward the legacy of activism and creativity. Jadavpur University's history is deeply rooted in India's freedom movement dating back to the Swadeshi movement during 1905-1906. Amidst the turmoil of a divided Bengal, a new era of resistance emerged, while education had to play a new role in this changed scenario. The National Council of Education (NCE) was born, aiming to propagate the nationalist spirit through education. By 1910, the society for the Promotion of the Technical Education in Bengal merged with the NCE, bringing the Bengal Technical Institute (later College of Engineering and Technology in Bengal)

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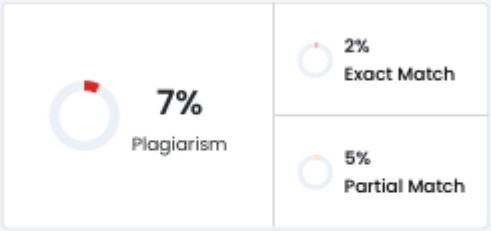

Words	944
Characters	6425
Sentences	43
Paragraphs	1
Read Time	5 minute(s)
Speak Time	7 minute(s)

Content Checked For Plagiarism

In 2014, the student protest Hok Kolorob (Let there be Clamour) that ran for four months was one of the most impactful student movements of its time. The diverse cultural manifestation of the protest included a large oeuvre of posters, graffiti on university walls. The walls transformed into a vibrant canvas of protest art, as students expressed their outrage against the university administration and the police crackdown. During the protest, students made a powerful statement by wearing black badges and burning effigies of the then Vice Chancellor, while shouting slogans demanding his resignation. Music became a symbol of their peaceful protest, with guitars, violins, and other instruments incorporated into graffiti, posters, and visual materials. Slogans like "Hok Kolorob" (Let the voice raise), "No to Police Brutality", and "Autonomy for JU" became rallying cries, while caricatures of protesting students with "Hok Kolorob" emblazoned across their open mouths conveyed the urgency and anger behind their demand. Three years after the Hok Kolorob movement, the West Bengal government's decision to replace campus political unions with apolitical student councils sparked widespread resistance among students. In protest, Jadavpur University students organized demonstrations on campus, leveraging graffiti and other visual language such as slogans, paintings etc. to express their discontent. Graffiti slogans like "Hok Union" (Let there be union) and "No to Apolitical Council" plastered on campus walls, echoed the sentiments of Hok Kolorob. Caricatures of students united against the government's decision, alongside symbols of resistance and democracy, reinforced the narrative of student power and autonomy. In 2017, large graffiti with stencil and spray paint depicting a young man running with caged sun started appearing on the walls of different places interestingly spunk up in the walls of Jadavpur during the HokUnion movement as well. Gandhi Bhavan, the hub of cultural events at Jadavpur University, boasts an incredible artwork at its entrance, crafted by the skilled artist Sumantra Mukherjee. This stunning painting pays tribute to India's brave freedom fighters, with the iconic slogan "Do or Die" prominently displayed at its centre. The artwork was specifically designed for the historic Congress seminar held at the university. The graffiti, made from black wall paint, showcases portraits of eight great political leaders who fought for India's independence. These portraits are strategically placed at the edges of a star-like design, adding to the artwork's visual appeal. The bold lines and meticulous details reflect the artist's exceptional talent and dedication toward showcasing the importance of our history. In 2020, six students from Jadavpur University's English department, calling themselves "The Graffiti Joint," created a groundbreaking Braille graffiti. The team consisted of Anik Mandal, Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, Emon Bhattacharya, Manikankana Sengupta, Subhradeep Chatterjee, and Utsa Ghosh. Inspired by European artist "The Blind," who created similar Braille graffiti in Vienna, Paris, and Budapest, the students aimed to promote cultural accessibility for the visually disabled ones. Their primary goal was to make cultural elements accessible to visually disabled stakeholders and visitors. The first Braille graffiti, located near the UG building staircase, featured the word "subaltern," symbolizing the marginalization of disabled individuals. "We called it 'subaltern' as disabled people are subaltern in many ways". The team created the graffiti without permission which somehow resulted in tampering of the artwork. So, they decided to make something more durable with the approval of the authority. The second piece 'Look' was then made inside the UG building of English department using cement and tennis balls to ensure more durability and easy to assess for every individual and onlookers. The

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7%
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Exact Match

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Partial Match

93%
Unique

Words	978
Characters	6577
Sentences	42
Paragraphs	2
Read Time	5 minute(s)
Speak Time	7 minute(s)

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Another thought-provoking graffiti housing the Vice-Chancellor's office, has borne witness to numerous protests and rallies that have shaped the university's history. The graffiti depicts a boy scrubbing the floor, accompanied by the slogan "Education, take this system." This image encapsulates the students' desire to dismantle the existing power structures and create a more just and equitable society through education. A poignant graffiti, crafted by the Arts Faculty Student Union, powerfully conveys the urgent need for protection against sexual harassment. Executed in bold red and black wall paints, the artwork features the silhouette of a girl with a distraught expression, her face and body engulfed by numerous red hands. This haunting imagery vividly captures the terror and vulnerability faced by women in today's society. Adjacent to the artwork, a compelling message is emblazoned in bold black letters, emphasizing the imperative need for a Gender Sensitization Committee to combat sexual harassment. Adjacent to the wall, another poignant graffiti captures the attention, depicting a hand grasping the prison bars, with a broken handcuff dangling limply. This powerful image serves as a potent symbol of resistance, freedom, and the unyielding human spirit made out of black paint on the newly whitewashed wall with writing . A recent graffiti artwork at Jadavpur University has sparked controversy, featuring slogans like "Free Palestine" and "Azad Kashmir," was painted on a wall near Gate 3, depicting a hand holding flowers tied with barbed wire. The Kolkata Police have filed an FIR against supporters of a left-wing student organization, alleging that they created the graffiti. The police claim that students are damaging university property, insulting the national flag, and promoting anti-national sentiments. The graffiti's bold graphics and imagery aim to convey the message of Kashmiri resistance and resilience. Interestingly, this artwork emerged during the RG Kar case, near the main road in Jadavpur University with students protesting and demanding for safety and justice. Students and faculty have protested the alleged presence of plainclothes police on campus, demanding campus safety and an end to what they call intimidation by the ruling TMC and state administration. According to a Jadavpur University student, the campus's graffiti scene has undergone a significant transformation. Students have expanded their creative expression beyond traditional political themes, exploring genres like literature, sexuality, art, and social issues. Self-expression has evolved, with students now writing songs, poems, and creating nature-inspired graffiti that showcases a cultural connection with the environment. Also, post-COVID, students have discovered innovative ways to express themselves, including digital art and posters, which are gaining popularity on campus. However, many students continue to follow in their seniors' footsteps, preserving the tradition of wall writing and graffiti to voice concerns about ongoing political crises and share opinions on pressing issues. They still write on the walls with those bold black and red colours showing that there are many serious topics that are to be discussed and portrayed in front of the authority. He believed that the merging of these different ideas and concept makes the university walls culturally rich and divers from many other universities. A postgraduate student from Jadavpur University lamented that the systematic removal of graffiti and slogans has had a chilling effect on student expression. Many students are now hesitant to write on the walls, fearing repercussions or backlash from authorities. Instead, some students have resorted to creating decorative patterns and drawings, devoid of any meaningful messages or emotional resonance. This shift is symptomatic of a broader decline in student activism and union culture, as

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0% Plagiarism	0% Exact Match 0% Partial Match
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Words	985
Characters	6667
Sentences	39
Paragraphs	5
Read Time	5 minute(s)
Speak Time	7 minute(s)

Content Checked For Plagiarism

Since late twentieth century, the students Presidency – first College and later University – and Jadavpur have multiple ideologies and beliefs which led to diverse kind of slogans and graffiti on the walls of the campus. The primary purpose of doing these graffiti were expressions of political opinions and demands as per their political ideas and supports to any particular ideology. Graffiti thus plays an important role during any protest or gatherings done by the students regarding their unresolved issues and showcasing their political ideologies.

For years, some enthusiastic group of students has always been there to create vibrant and bold graffiti on the university walls, driven by urgency and passion, which expressed their concerns and tensions through energetic writings on the wall. Some of them display free, bold and spontaneous calligraphy, while others are scribbled in hasty handwriting, conveying the immediacy and intensity of the events, circumstances and their reactions. Regular passers-by, frequent onlookers and occasional visitors have often been amazed by the visual output of students' activism. Many of them have tried to capture these visuals through camera, mobile phone etc either as casual clicks, or for serious documentation, or out of aesthetic appreciation. Being inspired by the iconic graffiti inside the Universities of Presidency and Jadavpur, many outsiders have occasionally created their own large-scale graffiti along the campuses' boundary walls, showing solidarity and appreciation for the students' expressions.

A PhD scholar at Presidency University, one of the artists behind the iconic "Azadi" graffiti, revealed that the raised fist with the word 'AZADI' on the university's main building staircase holds a profound meaning. To them, 'Azadi' represents not only national freedom but also independence to make personal choices, access to education and healthcare for all, freedom from upper-caste and religious majority suppression, and freedom for underprivileged students to live in hostels. The students' enthusiastic support played a significant role in making the artwork a resounding success, showcasing the power of community and collective appreciation for creative expression.

A postgraduate student at Jadavpur University expressed regret over the recent removal of graffiti and slogans from the campus walls, feeling that it had silenced many of the students' voices and restricted their expressions. He continues that, only a small fraction of the university's large student and faculty population participate in creating wall writings and graffiti that were expressing their inner thoughts, concerns, and ideas. They go beyond mere aesthetics, providing a public space where individuals can share their perspectives and connect with others. This form of expression allows students to convey their personal or collective thoughts and emotions, making it a powerful means of communication. The graffiti on campus walls is perceived differently by various viewers. Some see it as a legitimate form of art and self-expression, while others view it as nothing more than vandalism. The recent crackdown has threatened many students, who are now reluctant to write on the walls, fearing repercussions from the authorities. As the newer generation becomes increasingly self-absorbed and disconnected from the university community, its rich history of student-led movements gets demolished by time. Artist Aratrika Basu's iconic Dali mask at Jadavpur was a stunning artwork, which captivated students, inspiring companion graffiti and slogans that showcased the university's strong sense of community. The mural gained international attention, drawing

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Words	367
Characters	2455
Sentences	13
Paragraphs	2
Read Time	2 minute(s)
Speak Time	3 minute(s)

Content Checked For Plagiarism

A postgraduate student from Presidency University, who actively participates in student-led movements on campus, states that Jadavpur University students have more opportunities for self-expression due to the diverse range of engineering and medical departments. This diversity fosters different ideologies and forms of expression, which are reflected in the graffiti and writings on campus. The student highlights that Jadavpur University students also focus on social issues, such as the conditions of workers and labourers in West Bengal, and actively protest and show support for causes both within and outside the campus. The graffiti scene was highly influenced by West Coast hip-hop culture, allowing students to explore a wide range of styles and new mediums A final-semester student at Jadavpur University noted that Presidency University has a rich graffiti culture, with renowned artists having paved the way. The students' graffiti is characterized by its directness and simplicity, infused with a unique artistic essence that makes it interactive. Although some of the university's most famous graffiti were removed due to selective erasure by authorities, the culture has been kept alive by alumni who still reside in hostels, or are awaiting their degrees. The legacy endures, with the university walls continuing to convey messages through overwritten graffiti that remain visible to passersby. He notes that students at Jadavpur and Presidency University have the freedom to express their views and concerns on campus walls, providing a platform for them to showcase their imagination and emotions. Despite the removal of some well-known and political graffiti, they continue to write on the walls of the campus to raise awareness among their peers and offer a fresh perspective on the world they navigate.

Hence, the graffiti culture at the universities began as a non-violent form of protest, focusing on written messages to address critical social and political concerns. Initially, the aesthetic and visual aspects were secondary to the urgent need to express these issues. The culture was influenced by Western hip-hop and graffiti, encouraging students to experiment with various methods and visuals to highlight their causes using different materials. These inspirations encouraged the newer generation to transform the campus into a space where individuality flourish alongside a sense of unity and togetherness among all members.

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